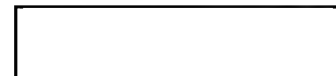


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Congo (Brazzaville) Handbook

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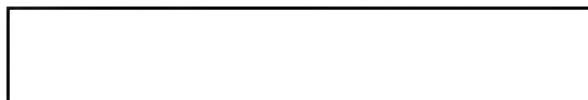
W A R N I N G

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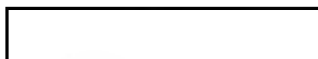
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INTRODUCTION

The People's Republic of the Congo, known as Congo (Brazzaville), is politically the most turbulent and radical of the equatorial African countries that received independence from France in 1960. Tribal, regional, personal, and ideological differences split Brazzaville's leaders into numerous mutually antagonistic factions that engage in constant political infighting at the expense of national development. Since 1960, the Congo's two "revolutionary" regimes have opted for radical nationalism, reflecting the generally leftist orientation of the leadership elite. Despite its Marxist rhetoric, however, Brazzaville on the whole has eschewed any radical social or economic restructuring in favor of maintaining its dependency on French aid and private investment.

Most of the Congo's 953,000 inhabitants are rural and tradition-bound. The Congolese are divided into 15 ethnic groups and 75 individual tribes. Although southern tribes make up over half the population, the present Ngouabi government is composed of primarily northerners, a source of much irritation among rival southern tribesmen. Unemployment among semi-educated youths who have flocked to urban areas is another important element of popular discontent.

The Congolese economy is predominantly agricultural with subsistence food production contributing the bulk of output. There are no sizable known mineral reserves, other than potash, and no major industries. Therefore, the country is excessively dependent on imported goods, which, coupled with an under-developed export agricultural sector, produces a chronic trade imbalance. Forest products, sugar, industrial diamonds smuggled from Zaire, and transit commerce with African neighbors are the mainstays of income, although the exploitation of potash, now only beginning, promises to increase export values in the long term. The French dominate commerce, finance, and export-producing enterprises.

Although officially nonaligned, the Congo sides with Communist and radical African states on most international issues and has close ties with the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, which maintain sizable diplomatic presences and are the major suppliers of military assistance. Brazzaville's economic dependence upon French aid, trade, and investment, however, makes cooperation with France and the French African community vital. Relations with the three other members of former French Equatorial Africa—Chad, Central African Republic, and Gabon—are reasonably

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good, despite the moderate orientations of these states and their distrust of the Congo's radicals. Brazzaville's relations with neighboring Zaire have generally been stormy, with each nation at times supporting subversion of the other. In June 1970, a reconciliation between the two governments was effected, but basic antagonisms remain. Brazzaville maintains a policy of staunch opposition toward white-ruled southern Africa, and gives moral and limited material support to an Angolan liberation group. Relations with the United States have been suspended since 1965.

There is no organized insurgency, but a power play by any of the Congo's competing political factions is an ever-present possibility. Labor, youth, and tribal groups are other potential candidates for active subversion. The armed forces, the key factor in the power equilibrium, mirror the country's social and political divisions and have unpredictable loyalties. For now, President Ngouabi appears to have the upper hand in the army, and his supporters hold the key command positions.

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I. GEOGRAPHY

Location

Congo (Brazzaville), located on the west coast of Africa, is bisected by the equator. This long narrow country is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean and Cabinda (an exclave of Portuguese Angola) on the south and east. The north borders the Central African Republic; Cameroon and Gabon lie to the northwest.

Area

The Congo's area of approximately 135,000 square miles is about the same as that of New York, New Jersey, and the New England states combined. Brazzaville extends about 750 miles northeast to southwest, and is no more than 350 miles in width. Only 105 miles of the Congo's 2,910-mile perimeter is coastline.

Climate

The tropical climate is hot and humid year-round. Daily temperatures range from 90 degrees F during February through April to the upper 60s in July and August. Humidity regularly averages 80%, and extensive cloudiness accompanied by heavy seasonal rainfall is common.

Topography

The terrain in the north and southwest consists of plains covered by dense tropical forests, swamps, or marshes. Low hills of inter-mixed savanna, forest, and crops make up the topography of the south and east. The tropical forests are closely spaced broadleaf evergreen trees up to 150 feet tall with a dense undergrowth of herbs and vines beneath the canopy. Swamp vegetation consists of large closely spaced evergreen trees and reeds 5 to 10 feet high. The savanna is composed of mixed grassy plains, crop lands, and less luxuriant forests of deciduous trees. The Congo River, which forms the country's southern and eastern border, is the major waterway, although dozens of smaller rivers and streams empty into it.

Natural resources

Agricultural resources and forestry products are the Congo's most valuable known assets. Nearly one third of the land is cultivable, although

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only 2% is presently farmed. The main cash crops are sugar, peanuts, rice, and coffee. Wood and wood products account for over 70% of the value of exports, and there are still sizable reserves of unexploited forests. There are relatively large and rich potash deposits, smaller reserves of coal and iron ore, and limited offshore supplies of oil.

Human resources

The Congo's population was estimated at 962,000 as of 1 January 1972. The growth rate averages about 2% per year, although the urban growth rate is substantially higher—perhaps 6%. The population is predominantly young and unskilled. About 40% of all Congolese are under 15 years of age. The productive working age population is about 40% of the total.

The people are mostly Bantu-speaking Negroids belonging to 15 ethnic groups subdivided into 75 tribes. The largest ethnic group, the Kongo, constitutes nearly half of the total population and is located in the heavily populated and economically developed area from Brazzaville to Pointe Noire. The Teke constitute 17% of the population and occupy a large territory north of Brazzaville. Twelve percent are of the M'bochi ethnic group which inhabits the underpopulated northern territories. Despite the population's physical similarities, tribal and regional animosities exist and have an important impact on the country's political stability.

The average density of the Congo is 7 persons per square mile, and the geographic distribution is very uneven. Large portions of the country are virtually uninhabitable and support less than one person per square mile. By contrast, 75% of the population lives in the southwest area from Brazzaville to Pointe Noire. Sixty percent of the population lives in small, widely scattered villages, but young people from the country are increasingly migrating to the cities in search of salaried jobs. Nearly 40% of the population now is in the major urban areas, and the proportion is increasing. Brazzaville, the capital, had over 200,000 residents in 1970. Pointe Noire, the second largest city, had 100,000 inhabitants in 1970.

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II. ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

Income distribution

About 40% of the Congolese population, some 360,000 persons, were estimated to be economically active in 1970. About 60% of this labor force is engaged in subsistence agriculture. There are only 79,000 wage earners, many employed in government service. A large part of the money economy is controlled by Western European interests, and payments abroad reduce the actual per capita income of wage earners.

Status of agriculture, mining, and industry

Agriculture—Agriculture, including forestry, fisheries, and livestock, is still the primary sector of the economy. Subsistence food production, estimated at 600,000 tons, makes up the bulk of agricultural output. Small farms predominate, but larger enterprises produce commercial crops such as sugar cane, coffee, cocoa, tobacco, peanuts, palm oil, and rice. Forest products presently total more than half the Congo's exports, and forest exploitation is increasing. There is room for development of livestock and fishing enterprises, which have been largely neglected to date. With only 2% of the cultivable land presently being used, agriculture could be expanded and efficiency increased were the government able to reverse the trend of population migration away from the rural areas to the cities and educate the people in modern farming practices.

Mining—Exploitation of potash at Holle, which may in the long run transform Brazzaville's economic situation, has so far been disappointing because of extraction problems, equipment wastage, and cost-overruns. With the discovery of a new oil field off Pointe Noire, crude production could reach 2 million tons in 1972, despite the near depletion of the Pointe Indienne field. The small deposits of lead, zinc, tungsten, copper, and gold are being quickly exhausted, but promising bituminous coal and iron ore reserves have been found.

Manufacturing and construction—The Congo is the most industrialized of the former French Equatorial African states, but its manufactures are limited largely to consumer goods and processed agricultural and forest products. The major products are beer, soap, cigarettes, and refined sugar. A textile plant built by Communist China in 1969 produces woven, dyed, and printed cloth. Industrial expansion in past years has been impressive, growing as much as 20% per year between 1963 and 1966, but this growth rate is not

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likely to be sustained in the future unless the government continues to finance major industrial projects and foreign investment increases (or at least continues). The construction industry, which presently accounts for 15% of the GDP, is expanding to meet the needs for urban housing brought on by population migration to the cities.

Transportation and communications

Transportation and communications are fairly adequate for the Congo's present needs. The most important communications feature is the combined route of the 317-mile Congo-Ocean railway from Pointe Noire to Brazzaville and the Congo and Oubangui rivers from Brazzaville to Bangui in the Central African Republic. These two routes provide transportation over the length of the country. A shorter rail line, privately owned and operated, links the Congo-Ocean railroad at Fauvre to M'binda in the north on the Congo-Gabon border. This line is used primarily to transport Gabonese manganese to Pointe Noire for shipping, but also opens up the interior of the Congo to possible development. Some 4,030 miles of navigable inland waterways and 7,000 miles of road, little of which is paved, permit the transport of goods to and from the interior. Pointe Noire adequately handles international shipping and receiving requirements and is being expanded to accommodate projected increases. Brazzaville is the major river port. There are airfields located at each of these major cities. The Congo has fair telephone and telegraph service, two radiobroadcast stations, and one television station.

Government economic policy and financial systems

Under the aegis of its policy of "scientific socialism," the government favors increasing state ownership and control of all enterprise through planned economy, as embodied in successive development plans. In the last four years, the government has nationalized a number of private utility and transport companies and a large sugar and food complex, which was already partly government-owned and faced with serious financial difficulties. The majority of Congolese business, however, is still owned or operated by private French firms. Economic planning has so far been characterized by poor project preparation and the absence of adequate budgetary support. Despite its desire to expand the public sector, the government has never discouraged desperately needed private investment, and relationships with the private sector are generally good.

Monetary and fiscal policies are made in cooperation with France and other African franc zone member states with whom Brazzaville shares a

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common convertible currency, the African Financial Community (CFA) franc, which is backed by the French franc. The Central Bank of Equatorial Africa and Cameroon serves the Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC), to which the Congo belongs, as a vehicle for monetary coordination and stability. Brazzaville has a National Development Bank and belongs to the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Foreign trade

Foreign trade is of great importance to the Congo because of its limited domestic market. Exports are equivalent to one quarter and imports over two fifths of the GDP. Although exports have risen impressively in recent years, 12% in 1966 and 6% in 1967, imports have grown even more rapidly since 1965, and the Congo's trade deficit has steadily increased. Timber is the largest export. The trade in diamonds smuggled from Zaire, formerly a major source of export income, has declined considerably with increased enforcement of border controls. Consumer goods, particularly foodstuffs, account for 50% of the total imports, but raw materials and equipment imports have increased with the upsurge in investment activity after 1964. Over half of the goods imported come from France, and Germany takes a quarter of the Congo's exports. The Netherlands and the United Kingdom account respectively for nearly 16% and 12% of Congolese exports; France takes less than 10%. The Congo enjoys preferential trade benefits with three neighboring countries through its membership in UDEAC.

Balance of payments

The Congo's substantial and increasing trade deficit in recent years has been somewhat offset by foreign aid and receipts from transit services. The over-all balance of payments usually shows a small deficit, and net foreign assets are now about minus US\$2.4 million. The Congo's balance of payments is tied to France through franc zone area arrangements. The country has avoided exchange restrictions because it has access through the Central Bank of Equatorial Africa and Cameroon to pooled reserves at the home office in Paris, which in turn can make use of overdraft facilities with the French Treasury. Foreign exchange expenditures are limited by a ceiling, imposed by a joint French-Congolese committee, on imports from non-European Community countries outside the franc zone.

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Growth rates and trends

The Congo's over-all economy has grown throughout the 1960s, but will probably slow down in the immediate future because few development projects have been planned beyond 1971. Since 1963, the GDP has increased steadily at about 4% per year, or about twice as fast as the population growth rate. Total GDP at 1970 prices is estimated to be near \$228 million, or about \$260 per capita.

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POLITICAL
SITUATION
AND TRENDS

III. POLITICAL SITUATION AND TRENDS

Historical summary

1882-1960: The French legacy—From the 14th century until its incorporation as a French colony in 1882, the Congo was dominated successively by three tribal kingdoms—the Kongo, the Loango, and the Teke. In 1910 the Congo became one of the four territories of French Equatorial Africa and Brazzaville (named after French explorer Savorgnan de Brazza) became the capital of the federation. Political parties were formed following World War II along tribal and regional lines after France had progressively extended the franchise and representative institutions to its possessions south of the Sahara. Brazzaville was granted internal autonomy in 1958 and acceded to full sovereignty within the French community two years later. Colonial rule fostered neither a sense of national unity nor indigenous enterprise, but at independence the Congo did possess a relatively well-developed administrative, educational, industrial, and transportation network.

1960-1972: Post-independence radicalism—Subject to strong centralized rule since 1961, Brazzaville has adopted the appearance of a Chinese-type "peoples democracy" under its third president—Major Marien Ngouabi. Governing at independence was a French-oriented elite headed by Fulbert Youlou, an unfrocked priest and leader of the largest southern tribe. Youlou resigned in 1963 in the face of strikes by youth, labor, and tribal elements dissatisfied with corruption, nepotism, and economic privations. Alphonse Massamba-Debat, a minister under Youlou, was then chosen to head a more youthful but still basically southern tribal government. With the emergence of a powerful leftist clique, a Marxist single ruling party was instituted in 1964, and its goal of "scientific socialism" found expression in a nascent state sector and a pro-Communist foreign policy. By early 1968, however, the growing influence of radical paramilitary youth groups resulted in an extended power struggle among Massamba-Debat's moderates, the extremists, and the factionalized army which was climaxed in August by Ngouabi's military take-over and the installation of his northern-dominated regime. Since then, Ngouabi has kept the Congo on its ostensibly socialist path while introducing his own "revolutionary" readjustments.

Political dynamics

Political instability is a constant feature of the Congo, for a complex mixture of tribal, regional, ideological, and personal animosities permeates

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its convoluted politics. The result has been a maze of mutually antagonistic and shifting political factions competing for government control. Under these circumstances, each succeeding governing group has been a loose coalition whose members have concentrated on political survival to the virtual neglect of the country's pressing problems.

Army strong man Ngouabi heads an incongruous alliance of fellow northern army officers and civilian leftists, most of whom are southerners. The government nonetheless remains generally unpopular with the southern tribes, and it periodically announces the foiling of new plots by hostile elements. Despite his radical protestations, Ngouabi has basically been a pragmatic leader and has increasingly allied himself with more moderate types in the regime in order to offset his radical opponents. For the moment, the power pendulum seems to have swung slightly to Ngouabi's favor in contrast to the clear ascendancy of the radicals two years ago. Ngouabi now controls key portions of the army and governmental apparatus, but the extremist faction retains important strength in the top party organs. Both sides are jockeying for the allegiance of the military, which mirrors the country's social and political divisions and has unpredictable loyalties.

Governmental system

Both the government and the single Congolese Labor Party (PCT) are theoretically patterned after their respective Chinese Communist counterparts. In December 1969, statutes for a Peking-style constitution and party were adopted creating an authoritarian presidential system. The president, elected by the PCT party congress, serves for five years and is the commander in chief of the armed forces. He heads the party's Political Bureau and Central Committee as well as the Council of State or cabinet. In consultation with the PCT, the president appoints a vice president and other cabinet members, establishes their functions, and has the power to dismiss them. In league with the PCT Political Bureau and Council of State he can also legislate by decree, thus assuring the party a key role in all law making. The court structure still closely follows French juridical procedure and appears to be operating essentially as it did under previous governments. Individuals accused of political crimes are tried by a separate Revolutionary Court of Justice composed of appointed party members.

In 1972 the Congo was divided into nine regions and one autonomous capital district. The regions are administered by commissioners who are appointed by the president to be responsible for security, public order, and the application of laws and regulations. Each region is subdivided into districts headed by officials assigned by the party.

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The PCT, the only legal party, is organized like most Communist parties, with power centered in a five-man Political Bureau and a 35- to 40-member Central Committee. The Political Bureau, as the executive arm of the Central Committee, is the most powerful leadership body in the Congo. Below the national level, the party has regional, district, and municipal organizations, as well as revolutionary committees in business, the civil service, and military. All other special interest groups, such as labor, youth, and women's organizations, are auxiliaries of the party.

Security system

Frequent command and organizational changes are made in the security forces to encourage their loyalty to the regime and to guard against possible subversion or invasion. President Ngouabi has placed trusted northern colleagues in a majority of top military posts. All paramilitary youth groups—centers of leftist strength—were disbanded by Ngouabi in 1969, and their "loyal" members were integrated into the reorganized regular army. The Gendarmerie was also absorbed by the army, following the participation by several of its officers in an abortive coup attempt in March 1970. The police and Popular Militia are directly subordinate to the Army High Command. For defense purposes, the country is divided into seven regional zones with troops loyal to Ngouabi controlling the autonomous Brazzaville zone. A political control board within the Army High Command oversees the ideological training of the security forces.

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IV. SUBVERSION

Foreign activities

Prior to the Congo's reconciliation with Zaire in June 1970, several groups of exiles from the Youlou and Massamba-Debat regimes were receiving active aid from Kinshasa, and two abortive attempts were mounted to overthrow Ngouabi. Since the rapprochement, however, Kinshasa's President seems to have suspended further coup efforts in favor of supporting Ngouabi against leftist rivals. Both the Soviet Union and Communist China maintain a sizable presence, and the Chinese have been particularly successful in expanding their advisory role and propaganda programs in the country. Chinese influence is limited to the leadership elite, however, and has made very little impact on the Congolese masses.

Communist party and front groups

The Congolese Labor Party (PCT) is the only legal party, and no clandestine Communist party or front group is known to exist. Within the party, ideological preferences run the gamut, with a majority oriented toward the Chinese.

Internal dissidence

Both Ngouabi's government and that of Massamba-Debat before him came to power as a result of coups. The present government, in turn, could be suddenly overthrown by a coalition of rival political or tribal elements. One Kinshasa-backed coup attempt in March 1970 had some internal support among gendarmerie officers. Although people are often arrested for anti-government plotting, there is no overt large-scale opposition activity at present, and groups such as labor and youth that might cause trouble have been largely neutralized by subordinating them to the party or army.

Exile groups

A few small exile groups of disaffected Congolese based in Africa and Western Europe remain possible sources of subversion. The most potentially threatening of these groups are located in neighboring Kinshasa. The other groups continue their efforts to gain foreign support, but factionalism and opportunism within their ranks keep them from becoming potent and cohesive forces.

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Popular discontent

The instability of the political situation, the preoccupation of Congolese leaders with political maneuvering, and the uncertain state of the economy are the major elements causing dissatisfaction among the urban Congolese. A large number of educated but unemployed youths have turned to radical politics to voice their discontent. The rural majority, however, is generally apathetic although the charge of discrimination by the northern-dominated government against southern tribesmen could possibly be used to incite tribal violence.

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VI. ARMED FORCES

Organization and manpower

The armed forces consist of a 6,470-man army, a 120-man navy, a 210-man air force, and a popular militia of several thousand members. There are an additional 73 foreign military advisers: 45 Soviet, 25 Chinese, and 3 French. The military is under the control of the president, the constitutional commander in chief. The Army High Command in Brazzaville manages the security forces in seven defense zones throughout the country.

Capabilities

The army can cope with minor disorders but has no offensive capability and could not suppress widespread insurgency. Major weaknesses include inadequate training, illiteracy, absence of a common language, and tribal and political rivalries.

Equipment and logistics

The equipment of the security forces is in short supply, and maintenance is poor. The army is equipped with French small arms and light vehicles, Chinese and Soviet small arms, and some Communist-supplied artillery, trucks, tanks, rocket launchers, and anti-aircraft weapons. The navy is equipped with nine Soviet assault boats and some river patrol craft from Communist China. The operational status of the forces' few transport and helicopter aircraft is unknown.

Military budget

The military budget for 1970 was about US \$10.4 million or 16% of the total budget.

Military aid

The Congo retains mutual defense and military assistance pacts with France and has military aid agreements with the USSR, Algeria, and Communist China.

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FOREIGN
RELATIONS

VII. FOREIGN RELATIONS

Although the Congo's official foreign policy is nonalignment, in practice its relations are determined by the dual considerations of the need for Western economic aid and investment and an ideological identification with radical African and Communist countries. Brazzaville belongs to the United Nations and several of its specialized affiliates and is an associate member of the European Common Market (EEC). In the UN, it usually votes on African matters with other radical states on matters affecting Africa and with the Communist states on East-West issues.

Africa

Economic advantages require that Brazzaville maintain good relations with the other former members of French Equatorial Africa--Chad, Central African Republic, and Gabon--and Cameroon, although ties with these countries are occasionally strained. Hostility between Brazzaville and Zaire dates back to the colonial period. Since independence, political ideology appears to be the major cause of periodic antagonism between the two. The moderate Kinshasa government views leftist influence in Brazzaville with concern, while Brazzaville fears renewed subversion from Kinshasa. The feud at times has resulted in open hostilities, with each country backing exile groups bent on overthrowing the other's government. Diplomatic relations were resumed in December 1970 after a two-year break but are at best tenuous.

The Congo belongs to the Organization of African Unity (OAU), where it sides with the radical states, and is a member of two French-inspired groups--the Afro-Malagasy and Mauritian Common Organization (OCAM), and the Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC). Along with other radical African states, the Congo remains vociferously opposed to any dialogue with the white-controlled areas of southern Africa. Brazzaville broke relations with Portugal in 1965. It provides the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) with sanctuary and broadcast facilities, and serves as a transit point for Communist-supplied arms.

Western countries

The most important Western countries represented in the Congo are France and West Germany. The latter has handled American interests since the US withdrew its diplomatic personnel in 1965 following a series of

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official harassments. Although French political influence has declined substantially since the Congo gained independence in 1960, relations have remained generally cooperative because of Brazzaville's dependence on French investment and economic assistance—presently about \$10 million a year—and continuing educational and cultural ties. Of the Francophone African states, the Congo has the second highest number of French technical assistants per capita, and the French business community is still numerous and relatively untroubled.

Communist countries

Diplomatic relations were initiated with most Communist countries after 1963, when the Massamba-Debat regime came to power. Ties are best developed with Communist China and the Soviet Union, but Peking, with whom many Brazzaville leaders identify, enjoys the greater rapport and influence. China has committed over US\$44.2 million in aid since 1964, of which some \$15.5 million has been drawn, making it second only to France as a source of foreign assistance. Although President Ngouabi depends heavily on Peking for aid, he does not appear to be as pro-Chinese as are his extremist rivals.

The Soviets have made little effort to match Chinese assistance to the Congo; Brazzaville's relations with Moscow are somewhat cool, and Moscow has failed to endorse the Congo as a genuine socialist state. North Korea conducts a modest but successful economic and technical-assistance program. Over 1,000 Cuban military advisers were in the Congo in 1966 to train radical paramilitary youth groups. By 1969, President Ngouabi had sent these advisers home, but Brazzaville extremists continue to have friendly contacts with Cuba.

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VIII. US INTERESTS

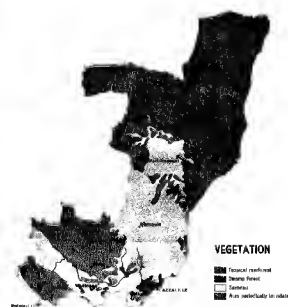
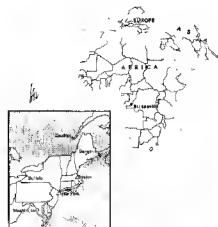
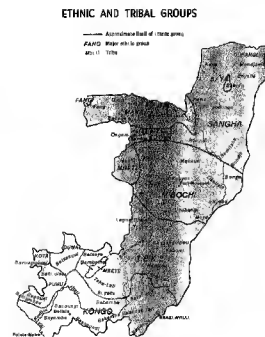
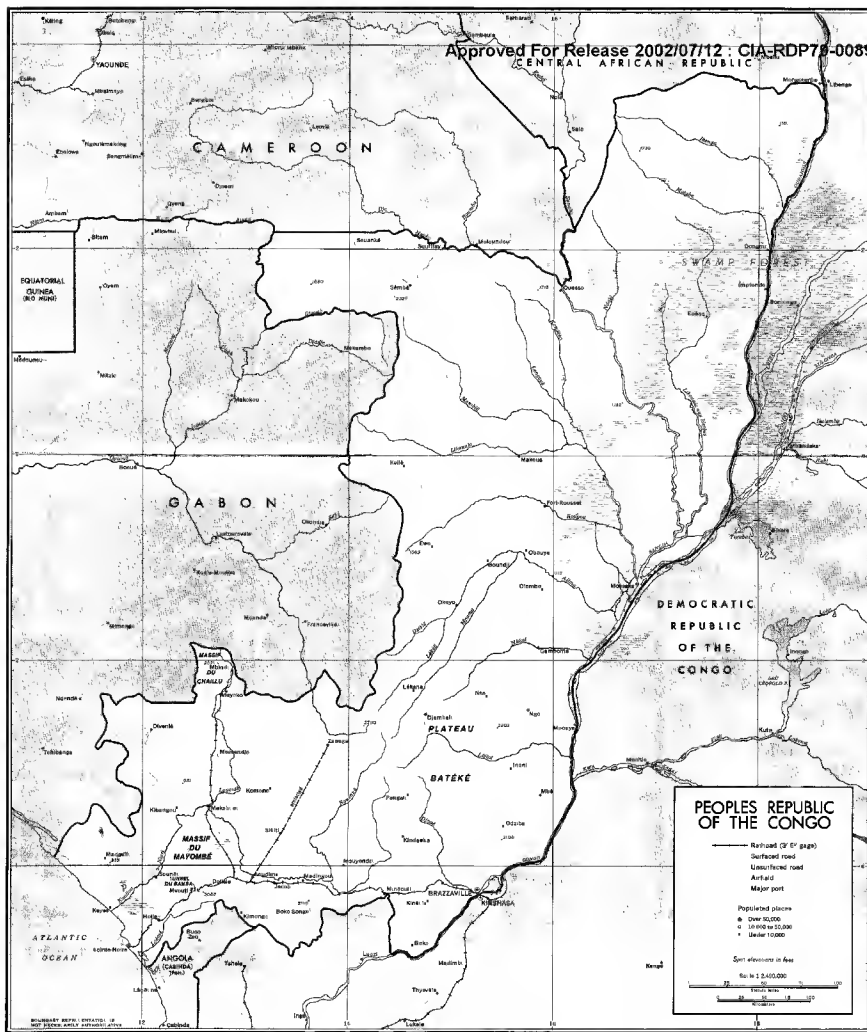
The US has had no diplomatic presence in Brazzaville since 1965, and Washington is represented there by West Germany. The main remaining US commercial interest is US Steel's 49% ownership of the COMILOG railway from Mouanda, Gabon to the Congo-Ocean railroad at Fauvre, Congo. The manganese ore transported over this rail line is important to the American steel industry. There are a few American missionaries in the country.

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